tions, but was resorted to by those who sought to encounter suicide in its least formidable shape. Among other instances, that of the Cean old men is related by Ælian, who when they had become useless to the state, and tired of the infirmities of life; invited each other to a banquet, and having crowned themselves as in celebration of a joyous festival; drank the Conium, and terminated their existence together.

The description which has been left by Dioscorides of the Conium, only shews it to have been an umbellate plant, his character of which might apply to many species. The mention made of it by Latin writers under the name of Cicuta are not more satisfactory. Linnæus, influenced by the noxious character of the modern officinal Hemlock, has appropriated to that plant the name of the Grecian species, and most subsequent botanists have followed his example. Haller, however, is of opinion that the ancient poison was not procured from this plant, but from the Cicuta virosa L. a poisonous aquatic, much more powerful and violent in its operation than the common Hemlock. Lamarck adopts the opinion of Linnæus, and believes that the Conium maculatum was really the Grecian poison, and that its properties were rendered more active by the

heat of the climate in which it grew. Guersent supposes that the poisonous draught used by the Greeks was not the product of a single species, but a compound prepared from several plants.

Were it not for the tranquillity and ease which attended death from the ancient hemlock, and which Plato has described with interesting minuteness, there would not have been much difficulty in supposing the Grecian plant to be the same with that known at the present day. [*Note* H.] It appears that a large quantity was requisite to insure death. The poison was swallowed in the crude juice, recently expressed from the plant. Of this the draught taken by Phocion was large enough to cost twelve *drachmæ*.* Socrates was prevented from making a libation of a part of the contents of his fatal cup, by being told that the whole was necessary to produce the consummation of his sentence. A large quantity of the modern hemlock might probably have been equally fatal, though with more violent symptoms than those which, if Plato be correct, were experienced by the Athenian philosopher.

The plant, represented in our plate, undoubtedly came to us from Europe. It is now sufficiently common in the United States, about road

* Plutarch, Life of Phocion.

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